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ABSTRACT

This booklet was developed to help Washington State principals meet their school-improvement strategies. It is intended as an information resource and is divided into five sections. Section 1, "Learning," provides an overview of Washington's school-improvement strategy. It focuses on standards, specifically the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALR), that an 11-member Commission on Student Learning devised, and highlights ways to measure progress and to achieve subject mastery and accountability. Section 2, "Leading," looks at leadership and includes information on developing a plan, initiating a school-building needs assessment, improving professional development, developing classroom-based assessments, finding time, ensuring inservices are effective, and using technology. Section 3, "Communicating," suggests strategies for successful communication and extends advice for reaching students, parents, and the community. Section 4 provides an index that covers questions about school-improvement issues in detail and outlines the various components of EALR, the steps in the assessment-development process, interpreting student performance, recruiting and hiring readers, preparing training materials, accommodating students with special needs, getting exemptions from state tests, conducting classroom-based assessments, and setting the fourth-grade performance standards. The last section features a resource list to help principals find additional information. (RJM)

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What Are You Doing To Improve Your School?

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

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INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ON

- Washington's School Improvement Strategy
- Leading Your Staff
- Communicating with Your Community

Commission on Student Learning

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Partnership For Learning

EA 029 906

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Principals at the Helm of Change

Students in public schools today will face a world far different from our own. It is incumbent on all of us to ensure that children develop the skills they'll need to live in a world of constant change and innovation. We need to provide them with a solid foundation in the basics and teach them to integrate and utilize their knowledge and skills across all subjects.

In Washington state, a school improvement strategy is underway to help students meet these higher expectations. It is built around:

- Clear, challenging academic standards that every student in the state will be expected to achieve in core subject areas;
- An assessment system to measure student progress toward the standards at the primary, middle, and high school grade levels; and
- An accountability system to promote continuous improvement in the performance of all schools and school districts. This system will include full, public disclosure about each school's progress in helping students achieve the new standards, an awards program, opportunities for assistance, and provisions for intervention in low-performing schools.

Success will require districts and schools to focus curriculum, instruction, and classroom assessments on the new academic standards.

As a principal, you have a unique and crucial role in meeting this challenge. You are the primary link to teachers, students, and your local community.

It's important that you have a clear understanding of what the school improvement strategy means for your building and teachers, and develop a plan for how these exciting changes will take shape in your school.

This booklet has been developed to assist you as an information resource. It is divided into five sections:

Learning, which provides an overview of Washington's school improvement strategy; **Leading**, which offers ideas and information to help you give your staff the support, professional development, and skills they will need; and **Communicating**, which offers strategies for informing and involving parents and the community in your school's improvement plan.

There is also an **Index** covering questions about school improvement issues in detail, and a **Resource List** at the end of the booklet showing where you can turn for additional information.

LEARNING

Challenging Standards for all Students to Achieve

In 1993, the state Legislature recognized that the world's changing demands required a thoughtful re-examination of how and what schools were teaching students. *An 11-member Commission on Student Learning was established and charged with designing a performance-based school system built around* **student learning**.

The Commission convened teachers, administrators, parents, students, business people, and community members statewide to help develop high and clear academic standards in eight core subject areas:

- reading
- science
- writing
- social studies (civics, history, geography)
- communication
- arts
- mathematics
- health and fitness

These standards are called **Essential Academic Learning Requirements**. They describe what students should know and be able to do with their knowledge as they progress through our public school system.

The new standards are a blend of broad goals — such as writing in a variety of formats for different audiences and purposes — and more specific benchmarks which describe what students should have learned at key points in their academic careers. For example, by the end of the fourth grade, students should be able to locate places on a map, read and understand children's literature, and be able to add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers.

With standards in place, a new assessment system is being phased-in to measure student progress and provide teachers with information needed to increase levels of achievement.

This system is called the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL). It includes:

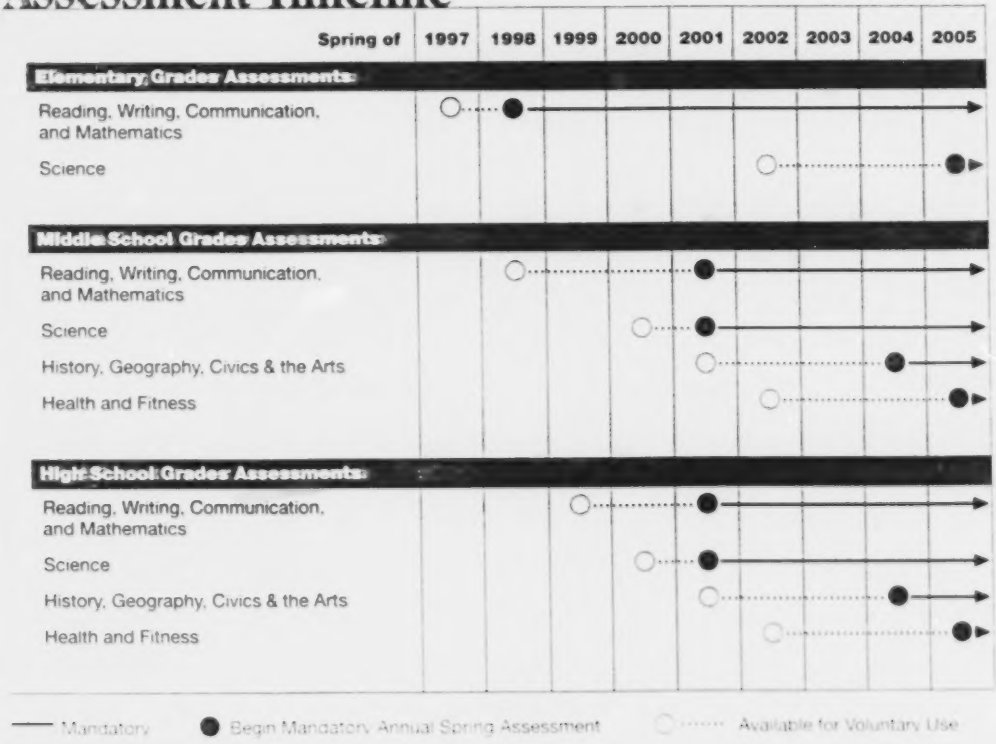
New tests at the 4th, 7th, and 10th grades. These tests are designed to measure student achievement of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements. The format requires students to apply and demonstrate their knowledge as they answer essay, multiple choice, and short-answer questions.

Informational score reports. Score reports will be generated for classrooms, school buildings and districts to help teachers and schools evaluate programs and make informed instructional decisions.

Classroom-based assessments for teachers to use every year at every grade level, K-10. Classroom activities, assessments, and materials are being developed to help teachers measure student progress over time and in a greater number of ways than is feasible with state-level assessments.

At the state level, the new assessment system will provide important information about the conditions that support or inhibit student achievement, as well as data on diverse student populations, special programs, graduation and dropout rates, attendance, and faculty training and experience.

Assessment Timeline



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Working Toward a Certificate of Mastery

Once schools have had time to fully implement the new state standards, graduating seniors will be required to earn a Certificate of Mastery. *The certificate will serve as evidence that students have successfully achieved the state's Essential Academic Learning Requirements.*

The idea behind the certificate is for students to be required to show what they've learned and can do with their knowledge — not just that they've spent the required number of hours in class.

Current plans call for the certificate to be awarded once students meet or exceed the WASL performance standards in reading, writing, listening, and mathematics on the high school assessment. The Commission on Student Learning, OSPI, and State Board of Education have recommended that the certificate become a requirement for the graduating class of 2006, with science added as a requirement in 2008.

This recommendation will be enacted when the State Board of Education determines the high school assessments are reliable and valid. School districts will continue to set additional graduation requirements.

Key recommendations for the Certificate of Mastery:

- **The certificate should initially include the standards defined in reading, writing, communication and mathematics;**
- **Endorsements should be offered in other content areas, such as civics;**
- **The certificate should be awarded once students meet the standard on the high school assessment;**
- **The certificate should be required beginning with the class of 2006, but districts may opt to offer it sooner;**
- **Science should be added as a requirement by 2008; and**
- **The certificate should be earned around age 16 (grade 10) and posted on the student's official high school transcript.**

Accountability for Improvement

The new state tests will provide information for teachers and schools about what's working, and where curriculum or instructional changes are needed. *In addition, score reports will be broadly reported to parents and the community at large about the performance of each school and school district as part of an* **accountability system.** *The system is being designed to ensure every district and school improves upon its own baseline of performance on the new state assessments.*

Washington's accountability system will promote student achievement of the state's four learning goals, academic standards, and the Certificate of Mastery. Districts and schools will need to focus their curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices to show performance improvements above their own "baseline" on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL).

Much remains to be done to develop Washington's accountability system.

Following are a few ideas being considered — all subject to revision.

An **assistance program** would help equip Washington's teachers, districts, and schools for success. This includes professional development, high quality materials, classroom assessments, tools to analyze data, and the electronic linkage of schools, libraries, universities, and agencies that support education. In addition, an academic assistance fund would be developed and allocated to further support districts in greatest need of improvement.

Awards given by districts and the state would provide incentives and recognition for improvement or exemplary performance, and provide opportunities to promote best teaching practices.

Interventions would be developed and implemented by districts to improve the performance of low-performing schools, and by the state if adequate improvement is not achieved over time.

Annual reviews of the entire accountability system would be conducted by a state accountability commission to analyze data, set and evaluate criteria for awards and interventions, ensure continuous improvement, and recommend changes in legislation and policy as needed.

These recommendations are being developed by the Commission on Student Learning with input from education, business, and community leaders. They will be available for public review in summer, 1998. Final recommendations will be sent to the state Legislature by the end of 1998 for review in the 1999 legislative session.

Questions you can expect

As Washington's school improvement strategy continues to unfold, parents will have questions. *They'll want to know more about the new tests and how the results will affect their children. They'll want to know what teachers are going to do next.*

You may hear questions like these:

- **How far along is this school in implementing the new academic standards?**
- **How does this school measure student progress? What types of tests are used and why? How do they relate to classroom work? Are the tests fair and accurate? How much does all this cost? How is my child performing relative to other students?**
- **How does this school deal with students who learn either slower or faster than average? Are all children learning as much as they can, as fast as they can? What happens to students who aren't meeting the standards?**
- **What is the school's homework policy? How many hours per week are students expected to spend working outside the classroom? What after school and summer programs are available?**
- **What community support does this school need? Does it have partners in the local business community? Does it have a strong core of volunteers who can give students extra help and adult attention? Does it have advocates who will ensure that it gets what it needs from the school district?**
- **How does the school communicate with parents? Is there a school site council? Who's on it? What powers does it have? Does it control the school's budget and staffing? What other opportunities are there for parent involvement in decision making, planning and activities?**

Your school, and others like it, will have unique ideas and strategies for helping students meet the new standards. Decisions about curriculum, instruction, spending priorities, and other important issues remain at the local level — and there will be increasing public interest in these decisions.

If this seems overwhelming, remember that answering these questions with confidence means you are most likely implementing an effective plan for success. In addition to preparing young people for a challenging future, your school's work to improve their performance will build confidence in public education.

LEADING

Developing a Plan

More than ever before, the public is holding schools accountable for evidence of student success. *As a principal, you can actively evaluate programs, building resources, and staff development to ensure these things align efficiently and effectively to improve student performance. Having a plan to guide the way is critical to success.*

Strategic planning is most effective when data are used to evaluate program effectiveness. This includes results from the Washington Assessment of Student Learning and other information sources.

Good strategic planning enables schools to develop, implement, monitor, and revise a comprehensive school improvement plan that effectively addresses the needs of students. Each school staff member has a significant role in improving school and student performance. Each has an obligation to work through steps in the plan to make the school a positive place where student achievement is paramount.

At a minimum, most successful building plans address the following:

- **Professional development opportunities for staff;**
- **Linkage of curriculum across grade levels;**
- **Performance improvement goals (on the new state tests and other measures);**
- **Classroom assessments;**
- **Communication with feeder schools;**
- **Use of technology, textbooks, and other instructional materials;**
- **Structure of the school day;**
- **School climate;**
- **Parental involvement; and**
- **Community involvement.**

Following are some steps to consider when developing a plan:

Step 1: Acquire Knowledge

Before any group can embark on a program of school improvement, staff must have a clear understanding of educational trends, issues facing schools, and the critical need to increase levels of student achievement.

Step 2: Analyze Data

The planning team needs to gather data, seek patterns, and collect information on student achievement. Strengths and weaknesses should be identified for the whole school, specific groups, and programs. Criteria for rating strengths and weaknesses should be based on student achievement of clear learning targets. In addition, the planning team should take an honest inventory of attitudes about and perceptions of the school among the faculty, students, parents, and overall community.

Step 3: Set Priorities

Once data have been studied and strengths and weakness identified, the planning team should prioritize needs. Where is improvement most needed? Are there areas needing urgent attention? Can any programs be reduced or eliminated? Are there major gaps? This is the step where the plan begins to take shape. In identifying goals and objectives, the planning team sets priorities and determines what it is they want to accomplish.

Step 4: Identify Effective Strategies

The planning team should consider successful programs and practices which have worked in other schools. Strategies for how goals and objectives will be achieved should be mapped out in detail. Additionally, the individuals or groups that will be responsible for implementing these strategies and monitoring the progress are identified.

Step 5: Prepare and Implement the Plan

Prior to implementation, the plan should be disseminated to the entire school community for comment and input. Multiple copies should be available at all times to ensure effective communication among all groups. At the onset of implementation, clear expectations need to be given, with support provided. For example, teachers are being asked to implement Essential Learnings in their classrooms. They need to know what the specific expectations are, when those expectations should be met, how they will know if they have been successful, and how they will be assisted in meeting the expectations.

Step 6: Assess and Revise as Needed

Once the plan has been set in motion, progress should be routinely monitored. Frequent and consistent monitoring helps ensure necessary revisions and adjustments are made and barriers are alleviated. Modifications may require minor adjustments or more extensive measures, such as intensive training or decision making. Adaptations should be communicated to all involved groups, including data to demonstrate why the change is necessary. If the results indicate significant (or maybe even slight) progress toward the objective, the only "modification" might be positive reinforcement, a celebration, publication, or planning how to keep the success going.

AREAS OF WORK	CURRENT STATUS
Understanding of Education Reform (ESHB 1209)	1 2 3 4
Understanding the Essential Academic Learning Requirements	
Reading	1 2 3 4
Writing	1 2 3 4
Communication	1 2 3 4
Mathematics	1 2 3 4
Social Studies	
History	1 2 3 4
Civics	1 2 3 4
Geography	1 2 3 4
Science	1 2 3 4
Arts	1 2 3 4
Health and Fitness	1 2 3 4
Implementation Planning	
Demographic and student information	1 2 3 4
Understanding of district-wide plans	1 2 3 4
Building plans	1 2 3 4
Implementation activities	1 2 3 4
Program evaluation	1 2 3 4
Implementation Areas	
Curriculum	
Curriculum review and alignment with Essential Learnings	1 2 3 4
Assessment	
Classroom assessment strategies	1 2 3 4
Professional development in assessment	1 2 3 4
Instruction materials	
Selection process for appropriate materials	1 2 3 4

1. Awareness
2. Beginning to implement
3. On our way
4. Operational

A Framework for Success

- **Link** the curriculum across all grade levels. The new state tests assess students at grades four, seven, and 10, but every grade in between plays a critical role. Make sure teachers are working together toward common goals — not in isolation.
- **Ask** each of your teachers to develop his or her "personal learning plan" for improving knowledge and skills related to the content, instruction, and classroom assessment of the new standards. This might include self-study, group work, commercial workshops, and district and state programs.
- **Look** for evidence that the essential learnings are understood and being taught when reviewing lesson plans and during classroom observations. Incorporate the essential learnings in conversations about classroom expectations, and set grade-level and team expectations linked to the essential learnings.

Professional Development

As a principal, you can lead a constant search for quality classroom assessment and instructional practices, and provide the support, resources, and opportunities for ongoing professional development that your staff will need.

Teachers need help to find good resources and information. They need opportunities to understand the essential learnings and time to rethink their lesson plans. Many will have to learn new skills required to assess student progress.

Professional development helps teachers expand their knowledge and skills. It puts them in touch with good ideas, and provides opportunities for teachers to become researchers and peer advisors.

There are numerous resources, materials, activities, and programs available to implement meaningful and effective professional development in your school. Many of these can be found in the last section of this booklet under resources.

One key question is, how will you know when your professional development program is successful? Following are hallmarks to look for when making an evaluation.

1. Staff development leads to specific changes in the classrooms and an increase in student learning.

What does this look like?

- Staff development is designed to increase teaching skills and centers around clear learning targets in writing, math, reading, and other subjects.
- Classroom activities are directly related to specific teacher in-service and training.
- Student learning is measured by reviewing student work in staff development sessions.

2. Inquiry and staff study center around student work and student learning.

What does this look like?

- Team discussions focus on what students are learning and what strategies are being used in the classroom.
- Progress is reported on an individual basis. Self-assessment is done by both teachers and students.

3. New information and knowledge improve teaching and learning.

What does this look like?

- Teachers investigate proven and promising teaching strategies, discuss why they are effective, and how they might be used in their classrooms.
- Teachers design and facilitate their own staff development based on core issues.
- Time is set aside for after-school meetings, planning time, and release time to visit each other's classrooms.
- Peer mentors are involved in discussion of instruction.
- Teachers see themselves as part of a greater learning community.
- Partnerships are developed with agencies and institutions that support education.
- Staff surveys are used to discover the core issues on-site and then are prioritized: a plan is developed.

4. High professional standards for teaching and learning are continually reviewed and discussed as an integral part of each teacher's learning.

What does this look like?

- Teaching standards are identified and modeled through professional development.
- Evaluation includes self-reflection, peer evaluation, supervisory evaluation, student, and parent evaluation. This might include portfolios and journals.
- Processes such as Cognitive Coaching training would be included and used in analysis of teaching.
- Teaching sessions are videotaped to allow analysis by peers and evaluators.
- Goals and successes at the classroom and building level are visible and clear. They are posted and reviewed in newsletters and other publications.

5. Professional development is targeted and aligned.

What does this look like?

- There is an ongoing assessment of the building professional development program.
- There is a parallel between growth and student learning and teacher development.
- Specific criteria are used to evaluate and support each teacher's professional growth.
- Team planning reflects the interdependence of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment.
- Activities provide opportunities for professional growth in a variety of ways.

6. Classroom practices are anchored in content and sound assessment practices.

What does this look like?

- Assessment is used to inform instruction.
- Teacher planning reflects the relationship of content, pedagogy, and assessment.

7. Professional development is part of the everyday life of the school.

What does this look like?

Examples:

- Peer instruction and sharing are prevalent throughout the school.
- Good information and research is circulated among the teaching staff, they talk about it, and it influences their work.
- There are celebrations of success.

8. Teachers are in contact with peers at other schools, and there is a regular information exchange.

What does this look like?

- The school proactively establishes connections with other schools.
- In-service activities include teachers from other schools.

9. Resources and time are focused on specific goals, and the acquisition of necessary skills and knowledge.

What does this look like?

Examples:

- Time is structured to reflect the school's priorities.
- The focus can be articulated by the majority of people in the school.
- Budget allocations support the focus.

Developing Classroom-based Assessments

Classroom assessments enable teachers to measure student progress over time and in a greater number of ways than is feasible through state-level assessments. *They promote "hands-on" learning and the application of knowledge. Classroom assessments are a critical part of a sound instructional program. They enable teachers to know what is working and where changes are needed to help students learn. Classroom assessments can be tailored to the varying developmental needs and learning styles of students. They provide tangible evidence that learning is on the rise in every classroom.*

There are numerous resources available to help teachers develop good classroom-based assessments. For example, the Commission on Student Learning has developed a "tool kit" of classroom activities, assessments, and materials. The tool kit contains grade-level frameworks for reading, writing, communication, math, instructional models, performance tasks and scoring criteria.

The K-4 tool kit in reading, writing, communication, and math is now available from local Education Service Districts. It will be available in these same subjects for grades 5-7 by August of 1998.

The tool kit provides examples of good classroom assessments. It is designed to help teachers get started create their own classroom assessments. Like most things, this is a skill that improves with practice and more practice.

To support development of good classroom based assessments, you might:

- Establish learning teams or study groups to more fully explore the creative world of classroom based assessments.
- Ask teachers to build "classroom assessment portfolios," in which they collect evidence of improvement over time together with their own self reflection commentary on their assessment competence and confidence. Encourage and support personal assessment study, as in university course work.
- Observe classroom activities and practices over time to seek evidence of appropriate focus on essential academic learning requirements and sound instructional and assessment practices.
- Have faculty share assessment problems and get help from colleagues. Take turns presenting classroom assessments for group critique. Promote examples which have effectively expanded student learning.
- Do assessment training and assessment development in curriculum design projects.
- Evaluate the quality of texts considered for new adoption.
- Weave professional development in assessment into grant applications.
- Provide a building mentor for every first-year teacher to help new teachers integrate the essential learnings and create good assessments.

Finding Time for Professional Development

Professional development is a key link in the chain of events leading to greater student achievement. *Schools are learning organizations for the adults in the building as well as for children. Teachers need time to:*

- Reflect on their teaching practices together;
- Share expertise;
- Test ideas together;
- Support each other as they implement new initiatives; and
- Evaluate the success of new initiatives upon student learning.

There's no shortage of things to do, but there is a shortage of time in the school day and year. The question is, where do you find time?

Following are a few ways teachers and schools across the country have found time to make professional development a continuous feature of the workplace. These examples illustrate the type of creativity and flexibility needed to find time for professional development, study groups, and program planning and evaluation.

- A number of the elementary schools in one California school district have implemented a program to dismiss students two hours early one day a week. This time is used for individual teacher preparation time and study groups. The program was initially resisted by some parents because it was an inconvenience to them, and they perceived the program was taking time away from student learning. Principals at these schools developed a plan to demonstrate that increasing teachers' knowledge and skills directly benefits student learning. Among other things, the plan outlined how teachers use their time and called for a quarterly report to keep parents updated about the innovative ideas and approaches learned in the study groups. Over time, this has enabled parents to see that teacher learning is not an abstract concept, but an important and necessary element for instructional success, and it has modeled the school's vision of students as lifelong learners. There has been broad support for the program.

- Several elementary schools in Georgia schedule assemblies and other types of schoolwide activities so that teachers in the same study groups are free from supervising students at the same time. This allows time for the group to meet.

- In Georgia, a high school benefits from a team of 19 college students that spend every Thursday at the school. The young men and women are participating in an environmental leadership program of the Atlanta Outward Bound Center. The college students do classroom and schoolwide environmental activities with the elementary students. This frees teachers to meet in study groups. The college students keep a record of the hours they spend at the school and, at the end of the school year, the hours are converted into dollars for college tuition by a local business association.

- Several schools in Connecticut have found a way to release teachers from the classroom for an hour and a half each week without dismissing students early. Professionals from area universities, health care facilities, community agencies, businesses, and city/county governmental agencies make presentations and facilitate discussions during this hour and a half in their respective fields of expertise. Students are sometimes grouped differently than in their regular classes, forming larger and smaller classes across grade levels. PTAs are also considering budgeting funds for this purpose where funds are needed.

All of these activities directly support student learning. Frequent examples of how students benefit have led to community support for time devoted to professional development.

Ideas for In-Service Activities

Because time is in short supply, special care should be made to ensure in-service activities are direct, relevant, and effective. *You may want to form a committee to assess needs and prioritize in-service funds so that moneys are spent for very clear purposes. Teacher attendance should depend on the need to gain specific skills and knowledge. In addition, you may want to provide time at every staff meeting to discuss a book or article relating to the essential learnings and performance-based assessments. Staff members can be assigned to research a topic and present findings to the group. You might also consider coordinating in-service activities with schools that share common goals.*

Here is a list of in-service ideas suggested by a successful middle school principal.

- ***Tailor in-service programs*** to your school's needs.
- ***Use substitutes for every grade level*** each week on a six-week rotation so that all teachers have the chance — every month and a half — to work with an expert, observe one another, and plan together to improve skills.
- ***Use substitutes for a half day*** every three weeks so a particular grade level is released for in-service and planning.
- ***Add 15 minutes*** to school schedule four days a week and, on the fifth day, release students an hour early.
- ***Create a summer institute*** centered around improving curriculum improvement.
- ***Hold a series of evening or weekend seminars*** on assessment and instruction issues co-sponsored by two schools with common goals.
- ***Have literature circles*** meet weekly to discuss a book or article relating to school improvement.
- ***Have teacher in-services during school days*** paid for by professional growth funds.
- ***Dedicate district professional days*** to instruction and assessment.
- ***Offer regional in-services*** on an after-school basis for schools throughout the area.
- ***Have in-service attendance depend on gaining skills*** in a specific area.
- ***Have staff take on an all-school project*** which requires them to use essential learnings and assessment strategies.
- ***Formulate building goals*** around improving skills in use of essential learnings and performance-based assessments.
- ***Have a curriculum committee select articles*** and discuss them at weekly staff meetings.
- ***Let staff members who have expertise lead*** planning and in-service efforts.
- ***Have building improvement team focus*** upon needed skills, gather ideas from their constituents, and suggest areas of in-service for the coming year.
- ***Explore areas of in-service*** and offer suggestions to the staff. Let staff pick the ones they like best.
- ***Have staff make a year-long contract with an expert*** and use that person to give small in-services, do classroom demonstrations, and fit instruction to teacher's needs.

- ***Form a district committee*** made up of representatives from every school. Have the committee assess needs and offer district in-services after school, on weekends, professional days, or release days.
- ***Have each staff member create a personalized action plan.*** Plans might include commercial workshops along with building, district, and state offerings. Staff should focus on gaining skills in areas they identify.
- ***Encourage the district to create a cadre of experts*** in a "trainer of trainers" model so that each building has someone with expertise who is expected to guide the building improvement effort.
- ***Get training*** so that you can provide in-service on curriculum issues.
- ***Provide a building mentor for every first-year teacher*** with the expectation that mentors will help new teachers integrate essential learnings and create good assessments.
- Once per quarter, ***have staff share a success*** they've achieved.
- As new goals are recommended, ***have staff do self-assessments*** so that they can build on success as they try new things.
- ***Have staff prioritize their training issues*** and eliminate those which don't help meet building goals.
- ***Provide learning time*** at every weekly staff meeting. Each week, pay a stipend to a staff member who researches a topic and presents the results to his/her colleagues.
- ***Train a core team of staff*** who each take responsibility for training one other person. Repeat until everyone is trained.
- ***Have staff visit each other's rooms*** to observe innovation in action.
- Ask staff who attend out-of-building workshops to ***write a short article for the staff newsletter*** or present a summary of the experience at a staff meeting.
- ***Form study groups*** around specific topics. Have groups present their findings to their colleagues.
- ***Provide college credit or clock hours*** for a series of in-service activities throughout the year. Include after-school sessions, professional days, and several weekends.
- ***Form a "sister school" relationship*** with another school. Share ideas and expertise. Provide substitutes so that teachers can visit their sister sites.
- ***Hold a workshop for other educators and present the innovations they've been using.*** Do this on a paid professional day. Include money for planning and clock hours for those in attendance.
- ***Ask your district to hold an "innovation fair"*** on a district professional day. Encourage teachers to present their efforts in curriculum integration and assessment.
- On district days prior to the start of school, ***have someone speak about reform issues.*** Pay staff for attending, and make attendance mandatory.
- ***Form a study group around a set of video tapes featuring an expert on assessment.*** Compensate teachers through clock hours or pay.
- Ask the district to negotiate extra days solely for dealing with ***reform issues.*** Make attendance mandatory, and provide a menu of sessions for various skill levels.
- ***Fund self-study projects*** for individual staff members. Have them present their findings to the entire staff.

Using Technology

Technology is revolutionizing education. *Technology enables teachers to reach beyond the walls of the classroom to bring relevancy, richness of resources, and connections with peers and experts. Technology can connect teachers with good information and research in their respective content areas, and can help them learn new teaching techniques and strategies for helping students learn.*

In Washington, electronic connections are being established between all schools, libraries, teacher preparation programs, Educational Service Districts, and agencies that support education. A plan at the state level is being developed which includes:

- Technology support to school districts through the Educational Technology Support Centers in each of the nine Educational Service Districts (ESDs);
- Enhancement of the statewide data network through eleven Internet hubs across the state;
- Networking consultants for local schools;
- Establishment of the Washington Interactive Television system for videoconferencing;
- Prototypes of on-line curriculum projects involving more than 300 classrooms; and
- Allocation of additional funds to districts for instructional materials and technology-related investments.

Additional information on this plan can be obtained through the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

If your school has no computers, don't wait for your district to pass a technology levy or to allocate funding. Contact local and state businesses to ask for help, and research grant programs.

Internally, you will want to make decisions about how technology will best be used in your school. You may want to:

- Develop and implement a long-term strategic plan for use of technology.
- Use technology in a way that supports your school's curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- Make sure your teachers are versatile in technology and incorporate it into their classrooms.

At every turn, be sure technology is used as a tool to improve teacher and student learning — not as an end in itself.

NCS Mentor for Washington

The Commission on Student Learning and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction recently released an innovative new staff development tool called NCS Mentor for Washington. It's a CD-ROM program designed to help teachers better understand the fourth grade assessments in reading, writing and mathematics, and how they relate to the essential learnings and classroom instruction. The program gives scoring examples, and can help teachers refine and expand assessment strategies in their classrooms. All public elementary schools in Washington have a site license to operate the program. A middle school version will be distributed in the 1998-99 school year.

COMMUNICATING

As a principal, you play a pivotal role in linking school improvement with the interests of students, parents, and your community.

Strong public support for high standards

A recent statewide poll showed widespread support for the effort to raise academic standards in Washington's public schools. *The poll surveyed 500 randomly-selected voters statewide. Primary findings were as follows:*

- Academic standards will clarify to teachers, students and parents what exactly should be learned in core subject areas. (95% agreed)
- Students are different and achievement will always vary. However, clear standards can help every student improve his or her performance. (95% agreed)
- Clearer academic standards should focus schools on achieving results and provide real accountability. (89% agreed)
- Students should not get a high school diploma if they don't meet the standards. (88% agreed)

When told about key components of the school improvement strategy, respondents overwhelmingly said they approved of each component — even if unaware of the education reform law itself. In fact, while only 21% of respondents considered themselves familiar with the law, support for each of the act's key components exceeded 70%, with ten of the twelve components receiving approval from 80% or more of those polled.

Respondents strongly supported using a mix of tests for measuring student progress. Essay and short-answer tests were seen as the hardest for students and the most accurate.

Some Tips for Successful Communication

Take time to listen and answer thoughtfully. *Make it clear to parents, news media, and the community that you are happy to answer their questions and talk with them about school improvement.*

Maintain open, honest dialogue. Provide public information in an open and honest way. Don't try to "spin" or "cover up" information.

Know your message. Be clear about the points you want to make. Base what you say on the facts and highlight where your school is headed with school improvement (preparing students for the world ahead) not just on the individual pieces (programs and assessments, for example).

Keep it simple. Plain language works best. Avoid educational nomenclature such as "rubric" or "systemic change." Make your messages clear, consistent, and relevant to student learning.

Use examples. Bring life to your school improvement plan by illustrating points with specific changes under way.

Key Messages About School Improvement

Many phrases and themes have been used over the past several years to describe education reform. *These terms are far less important than the attitude behind them, than believing we are headed in the right direction by raising standards in school. This effort is about clarifying goals and believing our students are capable of far more than we've asked of them in the past.*

Here are some talking points you can use as a guide when discussing school improvement, the essential learnings, and the new state tests:

- This school has a plan for helping students meet the standards.
- The standards expect more from students. The tests measure more things than many students have been expected to learn, like more in-depth writing skills, comprehension of literary texts, and the ability to apply math skills to solve complex problems.
- Simply testing students won't improve achievement. We need to use the standards and test scores to focus time and attention on areas where individual students need help.
- The requirements for success in the world have changed, and schools must rise to meet new challenges. We cannot stop short of continuous improvement, and must be on the lookout for new, smarter, and more efficient ways of working.

The essential academic learning requirements, the new state tests, and the information derived from these tests are a starting point for meaningful change. They offer a good platform from which to start talking more broadly about your school's improvement plan.

Reaching Students

Students are what our work in education is all about. *We are raising our expectations of them, and they are sure to be challenged. As the leader of your school, they need your full support. The example you set will be followed by teachers, and largely determine the character of your school. Here are a few tips recommended by principals across our state:*

1. Make it clear to all students that they are expected to meet high academic expectations, and that the entire school is dedicated to helping them succeed.

2. Create an environment in which every student feels recognized and safe. This means having enough contact with students to understand their concerns, triumphs and fears. It means nourishing a school culture that puts the well-being of students first and encourages a feeling that "these are our kids."

3. Do everything you have to do, whatever it takes, to make sure all students are convinced that they are the most important people in the school and that the entire school is dedicated to helping them learn.

4. Take every opportunity to celebrate students' successes-those related to school improvement as well as others. Make this recognition as visible as possible. Invite a local celebrity — sports hero, government official, community leader, television personality, musician, writer, or artist — to participate in an awards assembly. Visit the editors of the local community newspaper and ask if they'd be willing to publish the name, photograph, and accomplishments of a Student of the Month.

5. Systematically create opportunities to talk with students and, more importantly, to listen to them. Attend as many student meetings and events as possible, even if only for part of the time. Make yourself highly visible and approachable. You'll demonstrate your interest in the students' point of view and gain a deeper understanding of the school dynamics.

6. Create an understanding among students that they are active participants in their own education. At the middle and high school levels, integrate students into school decision-making by including student representatives on all committees. Make sure their perspectives are acknowledged and respected, especially when they are at odds with the ultimate decision.

Reaching Parents

Parents can do a great deal to ensure their children are meeting higher academic standards at school. *How children spend their time at home greatly influences their ability to learn well in school. They are, in a very real way, our partners in education. Here are some recommendations from principals across our state.*

1. Send home the message that parental involvement is expected as a crucial element of your school's improvement plan. One of the most important ways this message can be conveyed is in how you and staff respond to parents' questions, requests, suggestions, and complaints. It's important that the entire staff — teachers and administrators alike — respond directly, clearly, and positively to parents and have specific ideas for how they can help.

2. Continuously feed parents with suggestions and reminders of how they can help their children learn (some great ideas can be found in the Partnership for Learning's *Parent's Guide* listed in the resource section of this booklet — and it's free of charge).

3. Develop a contract that binds parents to a specific set of expectations. For example, parents should read aloud to their children, and have children read to them, for 15-30 minutes each day. Create a reading calendar to chart home reading and require parent signatures to verify monthly progress.

4. Appoint parents to all school committees. Ask these parents to deliver progress reports on committee work and school improvement efforts at PTA and other parent meetings.

5. Establish a "parent corps" to support a reading initiative. This corps can help recruit volunteers to assist students with reading. It can make an assessment of the quality of the school library and develop a series of programs to enhance the library's resources. It can organize a series of reading contests — with different levels — that recognizes and rewards all participants. It can solicit the participation of local businesses and other community members in providing incentives for reading.

6. Use technology to link parents to the classroom. Make creative use of the Internet and voice-mail to get parents involved in the learning process. For example, several hundred schools across the country have installed voice mail systems that allow parents to call for recorded messages describing classroom activities and homework assignments.

Reaching the Community

Community members not only vote on school levies — they can offer volunteer time and other types of resources critical to school improvement. *Here are a few ideas from principals across our state that have proven successful in achieving support:*

1. Develop a succinct, organized, specific, and inspiring presentation on your school. Ask for the opportunity to present it to the local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, neighborhood associations, and other civic groups. Your presentation should provide the specifics of your school's improvement plan and challenges to address. Ask for assistance in specific ways — volunteers to help with a reading program related to your plan, for example. It may be helpful to include a couple of parents and students as part of the presentation. Allow plenty of time for questions and comments. (Note: Partnership for Learning can lend support for these activities. See page 39 for more information.)

2. (For secondary schools.) Ask for the opportunity to make presentations to your feeder schools.

3. Establish a committee to secure financial or in-kind donations for school improvement programs.

4. Create a database so that you have a complete and accurate contact list of volunteers in your community. It is worth including a few notes, such as contribution to an annual auction or an offer to set up internships.

5. Develop a series of volunteer projects in which students address community needs. Coordinate these through existing programs wherever possible. Projects can range from cleaning a stream bed to reading to patients in a convalescent center.

INDEX

This detailed section is designed to help you fully understand elements of Washington's school improvement strategy. As a principal, your staff and the general public will continually look to you for information on these matters.

About the Essential Academic Learning Requirements

Essential Academic Learning Requirements are statements of what students should know and be able to do as they progress through school. *These statements are purposefully broad to serve as guideposts to school districts. Teachers have flexibility in designing curriculum, teaching strategies and plans for instruction. Each Essential Learning has key components which are intended to describe general categories of student achievement. Each component has elementary, middle and high school benchmarks which describe knowledge and skills in greater detail at three grade levels.*

Development of the Essential Learnings was directed by eight Subject Advisory Committees comprised of:

- Teachers
- Parents
- High school students
- Business leaders
- Community members

An extensive public involvement process was then executed involving professional organizations, parent groups, community-based non-profits, and educators. In addition, a dozen video conferences were held around the state to provide the general public a chance to review and comment upon the new standards.

In March 1995, the Commission on Student Learning adopted the Essential Academic Learning Requirements in reading, writing, communication, and mathematics. In April of 1996, the commission adopted the new standards in science, social studies, the arts, and health and fitness. All eight subjects were again reviewed and updated in February of 1997.

For a full copy of the essential learnings, call the Commission at (360) 664-3155.

Note on Science

On December 10, 1997, the Commission directed its Science committee to further refine the Science content standards. It was felt that students and schools would not be able to cover the volume of material outlined in the Science standards, and that greater focus within the discipline was needed.

The committee presented revisions to the Commission in the summer of 1998. A copy can be found on the Internet (http://csl.wednet.edu)

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One of the Commission's paramount tasks is to develop an assessment system that measures student achievement of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements.

The assessment system has four primary components:

1. State level assessments
2. Professional development
3. Classroom-based assessments
4. School and school district context indicators

The state tests, called the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL), are administered at grades 4, 7, and 10 and are criterion-referenced. Items for the fourth grade tests were field tested during the 1995-96 school year. Following the pilot, operational forms were constructed to test specifications. The first operational test was administered in the spring of 1997.

Question Types

There are three types of questions on the WASL tests: multiple choice, short answer, and extended response. For each multiple-choice question, students select the one best answer from among three or four choices provided. Each multiple-choice question is worth one point. These questions are machine scored.

The other two "open-ended" question types — short answer and extended response — require students to give their own response in words, numbers, or pictures (including graphs or charts). Short-answer questions are worth two points (scored 0, 1, or 2) and extended-response questions are worth four points (scored 0, 1, 2, 3, or 4). On these questions, student responses are assigned partial or full credit based on carefully defined scoring criteria. These questions cannot be scored by machine and require handscoring by well-trained professional scorers.

In addition to the three question types, students are asked to do two writing assignments (prompts). These prompts may require the students to write a letter requesting information, describe an important event or situation, write a story based on a picture presented, or explain a procedure for completing a task or project. Each prompt is worth six points and is handscored for content, organization, and style (1, 2, 3, or 4 points) and mechanics and spelling (0, 1, or 2 points).

STEPS IN ASSESSMENT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

1. Select Content Committees

The first step in the test development process was to select the "Content Committees" which worked with Commission staff and the Commission's contractor, Riverside Publishing Company, to develop the actual questions which make up the assessments at each grade level. Each Content Committee was composed of 20 to 25 persons from around the state most of whom were classroom teachers and curriculum specialists who had teaching experience at or near the grades and in the content areas (i.e., reading, writing, communication or mathematics) that were to be assessed. All of the items used in the assessments were reviewed, edited, and approved by these committees.

2. Common Agreement

The second step in the development process was coming to a common agreement about the meaning and interpretation of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and which ones could be assessed at the state level. Here it was very important that the Contractor, the Content Committees and the Commission staff were in agreement, in concrete ways, about what students were expected to know and be able to do and how these skills and knowledge would be assessed.

3. Test Specifications

Next, test specifications were prepared. Test specifications define and describe such details as the kinds and number of items on the assessment, the blueprint or physical layout of the assessment, the amount of time to be devoted to each content area, and the scores to be generated once the test is administered. It was important that the goals of the assessment and the ways in which the results would be used be established at this stage so that the structure of the test would support the intended uses. In addition, the Test Specifications are the basics for developing equivalent test forms in subsequent years as well as creating new items to supplement the item pool.

4. Develop Item Specifications

Based on the clarification of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and the Test Specifications, the next step was to develop Item Specifications. Item specifications provide sufficient detail, including sample items, to direct item writers in the development of appropriate test items for each Essential Academic Learning Requirement. Separate specifications were produced for the different item

types including multiple-choice, short answer and extended response. The Test and Item Specification documents were not only essential for test construction but taken together they will be powerful tools for teachers in developing instructional practices and for administrators in reviewing instructional programs.

5. Preparation of Sample Items and Scoring Criteria

Once the Test and Item Specifications were completed and reviewed by the Content Committees, the Contractor's item writers prepared sample items and scoring criteria to these specifications. The Content Committees' task was then to review the items and scoring criteria to assure that the item writers had followed the specifications. As necessary items were revised to ensure that they measure Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements both accurately and comprehensively.

6. Pilot Test Review by Content Committee

Once the Content Committees were satisfied that the sample items and scoring criteria were appropriate, the item writers then produced literally hundreds of items to be pilot tested at the selected grade levels. Each test item was coded by content (Essential Academic Learning Requirement) area and item type (multiple choice, short answer, extended response) and presented to the Content Committees for final review just as they were to appear on the pilot test forms (including graphics, art work, and location on pages).

Once again, the Content Committees reviewed each item focusing on its fit to the Item Specifications and the appropriateness of item content. For all short answer and extended response items the proposed scoring guidelines (rubrics) were also reviewed. The Committees' had three options with each item: approve the item (and scoring guidelines) as presented, recommend changes or actually edit the item (or scoring guidelines) to improve the item's "fit" to the Essential Academic Learning Requirements and the Specifications, or eliminate the item from use in the assessment.

7. Pilot Test Review by Fairness Committee

In addition to the Content Committees, a separate Fairness Review Committee reviewed each item to identify language or content that might be inappropriate or offensive to students, parents, or communities or items which might contain "stereotypic" or biased references to gender, race, or culture. As with the Content reviews, The Fairness Committee reviewed each item and accepted, edited, or rejected it for use on the pilot assessment.

8. Administration of Pilot Assessment

In order to be included on the pilot assessment, every item was reviewed and approved by *both* the Content Committees and the Fairness Review Committee. The approved items were then assembled into pilot test forms and administered to carefully selected representative samples of students across the state. All schools were invited to participate in the pilot testing with 85% of fourth graders taking part.

The purpose of these reviews was to determine that:

- Each item was an appropriate measure of its intended content;
- The item had appropriate difficulty for the grade level of the examinees;
- There was only one correct or best answer for each objectively scored item;
- The scoring guidelines for the open response tasks were appropriate and complete; and
- The items were free from content that might disadvantage some students for reasons unrelated to the concept or skill being tested.

9. Scoring Responses

Following the administration of the pilot assessment, the next steps included scoring the student responses following the scoring criteria approved by the Content Committees. A variety of statistical analyses were then employed to determine the effectiveness of the items and to check for item bias that may have been missed by the earlier reviews.

After the statistical reviews were completed, the Content and Fairness Review Committees reviewed these results and made a final determination about item quality and appropriateness based on the pilot test data. At this point, items were either accepted or rejected. Once these reviews were completed, Commission staff and the Contractor prepared the first "operational" form of the assessment based on the Test Specifications.

In subsequent years, new operational forms will be developed by selecting items according to the Test Specification from the large pool of items field-tested in the pilot assessment and approved by the Review Committees.

In addition, following the pilot, an "Example Test" and an "Assessment Sampler" were prepared and distributed to all schools for their review and use. These materials include a full-length, parallel version of the operational assessment as well as examples of the scoring guides (rubrics) and annotated student work that define the score points on the scoring criteria.

Following the administration of the first operational Grade 4 assessment in Spring, 1997, the tests were scored for all participating students. A Standard-Setting Committee was convened to establish the performance levels appropriate for reporting students' achievement of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements. Based on the standards set by the Committee and approved by the Commission on Student Learning, results for the first Grade 4 operational assessment were reported in September, 1997.

INTERPRETING STUDENT PERFORMANCE

The purpose of an achievement test is to determine how well a student has learned important concepts and skills. Test scores are used to make inferences about students' overall performance in a particular domain. In order to decide "how well" a student has done, some external frame of reference is needed. When we compare a student's performance to a desired performance, this is considered a criterion-referenced interpretation. When we compare a student's performance to the performance of other students, this is considered a norm-referenced interpretation.

Criterion-Referenced Tests — such as the WASL — are intended to provide a measure of the degree to which students have achieved a desired set of learning targets (desired conceptual understandings and skills) that have been identified as appropriate for a given grade or developmental level in school. Careful attention is given to making certain that the items on the test represent only the desired learning targets and that there are sufficient items for each learning target to make dependable statements about students' degree of achievement related to that target. When a standard is set for a criterion-referenced test, examinee scores are compared to the standard in order to draw inferences about whether students have attained the desired level of achievement. Scores on the test are used to make statements like, "this student meets the minimum mathematics requirements for this class," or "this student knows how to apply computational skills to solve a complex word problem."

Norm-Referenced Tests — such as the CTBS — are intended to provide a general measure of some achievement domain. The primary purpose of norm-referenced tests is to make comparisons between students, schools and districts. Careful attention is given to creating items that vary in difficulty so that even the most gifted students may find that some of the items are challenging and even the student who has difficulty in school may respond correctly to some items. Items are included on the test that measure below-grade-level, on-grade-level, and above-grade-level concepts and skills. Items are spread broadly across the domain. While some norm-referenced tests provide objective-level information, items for each objective may represent concepts skills that are not easily learned by most students until later years in school. Examinee scores on a norm-referenced test are compared to the performances of a norm-group (a representative group of students of similar age and grade). Norm groups may be local (other students in a district or state) or national (representative samples of students from throughout the United States). Scores on norm-referenced tests are used to make statements like, "this student is the best student in the class," or "this student knows mathematical concepts better than 75% of the students in the norm group."

It is often desirable to have both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced information about students' performance. The referencing scheme is best determined by the intended use of the test. If tests are being used to make decisions about the success of instruction, the usefulness of an instructional or administrative program, or the degree to which students have attained a set of desired learning targets, then criterion-referenced tests and interpretations are most useful. If the tests are being used to select students for particular programs or compare students, districts, and states, then norm-referenced tests and interpretations are useful. In some cases, both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced interpretations can be made from the same achievement measures.

RECRUITING AND HIRING READERS

The Commission has contracted National Computer Systems (NCS) to score the assessments. Highly-qualified, experienced readers are essential to achieving and maintaining consistency and reliability in scoring student responses. Readers must have the following qualifications:

- A minimum of a bachelor's degree in an appropriate academic discipline, such as English, English Education, Math, Math Education or a related field;
- Demonstrable ability in performance assessment scoring; and
- Teaching experience, especially at the elementary or secondary level.

Team and table leaders, responsible for supervising small groups of readers, are appointed from NSC's pool of qualified readers. These supervisors are selected on the basis of demonstrated expertise in all facets of the scoring process, including strong organizational abilities.

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RANGE-FINDING AND PREPARING TRAINING MATERIALS

NSC's Performance Scoring Center (PSC) is responsible for preparing all training materials, in consultation with and subject to the approval of Riverside Publishing Company (the test developer) and the state of Washington. NSC's experience confirms that thoughtful selection of papers for range-finding and the subsequent compilation of anchor papers and other training materials is essential to ensuring that scoring can be conducted consistently, reliably and equitably.

As the first step in the range-finding process, performance assessment specialists and team leaders will become thoroughly familiar with Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements and state-level assessments. Throughout this process, NCS staff actively invites consultation with Riverside and Washington staff members.

The PSC range-finding teams begin work by having clerical staff photocopy a random selection of student responses for each prompt. The packets of responses are read independently by members of a team of our experienced raters. Following their independent reading and tentative rating of the papers, the group works together to discuss both their in-common and divergent scores. From this work they assemble tentative sets of responses for each prompt.

The primary task of the range-finding committee is the identification of anchor papers — exemplars that clearly and unambiguously represent the solid center of a score point as described in the rubric. Those exemplar and anchor papers form the basis not only of scorer training, but of subsequent range-finding discussion as well.

PREPARING TRAINING MATERIALS

Following the range-finding sessions, PSC performance assessment specialists and team leaders focus upon finalizing anchor sets and other training materials, as identified in the range-finding meetings. The anchor papers are chosen for the clarity with which they exemplify the criteria listed in the scoring criteria.

Drawing from the pool of additional resolved student responses, PSC staff construct the training and qualifying sets to be used in reader training. The first consists of responses that are clear-cut examples of each scorer point; the second is made up of responses considered to be more on the borderline between two scores. The training sets give readers an introduction to the variety of responses they will encounter while scoring, as well as allowing them to develop their decision-making capability for scoring those papers that do not fall neatly into one of the scoring levels.

TRAINING READERS

Reader training for each prompt is led by the assigned performance assessment specialist and team leader. Their primary goal is to convey to the readers the decisions made by the range-finding committee and to help readers internalize the scoring protocol so they may effectively apply those decisions.

The reader training session begins with an introduction to the assessment. In addition, readers are informed of the parameters within which the students' performance is being evaluated. This gives readers a better understanding of what types of response can be expected, given instructional or time limitations. Following that description, the readers receive a description of the scoring criteria that applies to the responses. The trainers turn to the first item to be scored, and to the scoring rubric itself.

The rubric is presented in conjunction with the anchor papers. After presentation and discussion of the anchor papers, each reader is given a training set consisting of ten papers. The readers score the papers independently. When all readers have scored the training set, their preliminary scores are collected for reference.

Group discussion is an invaluable portion of reader training, allowing the readers to raise questions about the application of the scoring rubric and giving them a context for those questions.

Ongoing training throughout the scoring project is essential to achieving high inter- and intra-reader reliability. Therefore, training is a continuous process and readers are consistently given feedback as they score. With the help of a variety of reliability reports, the NCS performance assessment specialists and team leaders are able to closely monitor each reader's performance.

The most immediate method of monitoring a reader's performance is through backreading by table leaders. During the scoring project, each table leader backreads an average of five percent of each reader's work each day, with a higher percentage early in the project. If a table leader discovers that a reader is consistently assigning scores other than those the table leader would assign, he or she will consult with the team leader and performance assessment specialist and together they will retrain that reader, using the original anchor papers and training materials. This on-the-spot checking also provides an effective guard against reader drift. Readers who prove unable to score consistently with the rubric after retraining will be released from the project.

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ASSESSMENTS IN ADDITION TO THE WASL

The new state assessments will not replace existing norm-referenced tests, and local school districts will continue to have the authority to administer additional exams. However, in its 1998 session, the state Legislature approved a measure calling for a new test to be administered at the third grade in place of the current fourth grade Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS).

SCORE REPORTS

Score reports for the state assessments are reported each fall. These reports have been designed to help teachers and parents see where students are doing well and where they need additional help to meet the state's academic standards. Reports are generated for individual students, classrooms, school building and school districts. Information derived from these reports will help teachers and schools evaluate programs and make informed instructional decisions.

TEST SECURITY

Directions for Administration are provided to every teacher or test administrator. This document explicitly outlines proper test procedures. Inappropriate procedures can compromise interpretations of student work. For example, school personnel copying secure test materials to share with students and staff, reading passages on the reading tests to students, and making corrections to students' spelling and mechanics on the writing tests are serious violations of professional ethics and are outlined by state law and State Board of Education's rules covering acts of unprofessional conduct. RCW 28A.635.040 and WAC 180-87-060 and -095 provide civil penalties and sanctions for such acts, including fines of $100 to $500 and revocation of professional certification.

RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Reliability covers consistency over time — that is, if you tested the student today and again next week, would you get the same results. The WASL is a reliable measure of student learning.

Without doubt, test reliability can be impacted by testing conditions. Students are not likely to do as well on an exam during which there is a fire drill as they are if uninterrupted. The state has developed clear administration guidelines and a suggested testing schedule, but it is critical that good professional judgment is exercised at the local level. Students are more likely to do their best work if their regular learning environment remains consistent during the assessment period.

Validity deals with whether the assessment effectively measures the learning it was designed to measure. The WASL is a valid measure of student learning.

The assessment measures student achievement of *Essential Learnings* developed by more than 400 teachers, parents, students, businesspeople, and community representatives. Thousands more provided written comments or testimony at meetings across the state. The assessment is valid to the degree our state has reached consensus on what students should know and be able to do as they progress through school.

CLASSROOM-BASED ASSESSMENTS

Classroom-based assessments are an important part of the new assessment system. They provide a classroom-based means for measuring student performance and progress toward meeting academic standards through tasks such as interviews, presentations, projects and collections of a student's work spanning a period of time during the school year.

A series of classroom assessments, activities and materials have been assembled in a K-4 "Tool Kit." The tool kit contains grade-level frameworks for K-4 reading, writing, communication and math, instructional models, performance tests and scoring criteria.

Classroom-based assessments enable teachers to measure the performance of students who have varying developmental needs and learning styles. Additionally, student learning can be measured over a period of time and in a greater number of ways than is feasible with statewide assessments.

COST OF THE SYSTEM

The cost for the assessment system is approximately $29.00 per-student-tested (about one-half of one percent of the per-pupil expenditure allotted to schools by the state).

The Essential Academic Learning Requirements are content standards. *They describe what students should know and be able to do in core subjects. The WASL measures student achievement of the Essential Learnings against* **performance standards**. *Performance standards describe the level of achievement necessary to "meet the standard" in any one content area.*

Setting performance standards on Washington's new assessments is essentially a systematic, judgmental process aimed at establishing a consensus, among knowledgeable people, regarding what students should know and be able to do — and how well they should be able to do it.

Performance standards were set for grade four in the summer of 1997. They will be set for grade seven in the summer of 1998, and grade 10 once the test is fully developed (it was piloted in the spring of 1998).

The new assessments have defined in concrete terms some of the important knowledge, skills, and abilities students should demonstrate in relation to the Essential Academic Learning Requirements. The purpose of the standard-setting process is to establish the ***level of performance expected*** of students who are meeting the standard in listening, reading, writing, and mathematics. The emphasis for the judges in the standard setting process will be on what students ***should*** know and be able to do near the end of the grade tested.

SETTING THE FOURTH GRADE PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

In setting the grade four performance standards, two standard-setting committees were assembled — one for reading and writing and one for mathematics and listening. Each committee was composed of mostly classroom teachers with extensive experience at or near grade four. In addition to teachers, each committee included educational administrators and specialists, as well parent and community representatives. Committee members were selected from a pool of nominees submitted by Educational Service Districts, professional associations, business and labor organizations, and parent groups.

Generally, grade four standard setting involved the following steps:

- Committee orientation to the standard setting process
- Reviewing the Essential Academic Learning Requirements
- Examining and actually taking the tests
- Reviewing examples of student work along with the scoring criteria
- Establishing the level of performance on the test that will define the standard in each content area.

The actual standard setting process began with a focus on a working definition of what performance that meets the standard in each content area looks like. Working independently, judges then went through all of the test questions, including scoring criteria, and provided an initial judgment about what level of performance on the test corresponds to what should be expected of a student who is performing at the standard.

Next, judges were asked to reconsider their individual judgments in light of the discussions. These collective judgments were then discussed and summarized in the entire committee to establish the total committee's recommendation about the level of performance on each test that will define the standard in each content area. That is, what score on each test must a student achieve to meet the standard. Finally judges were asked to help draft descriptions of the skills and knowledge required of students who achieve the standard the committees have set in each content area.

Throughout the standard-setting process, judges were asked to discuss and refine their judgments in light of the Essential Academic Learning Requirements, what students ***should*** know and do in each content area, examples of student responses on the tests, and the scoring criteria.

The committees' recommended standard for each content area was considered by the Commission on Student Learning at its July 8, 1997 meeting. The Commission unanimously approved the committee's work.

Guidelines for inclusion and accommodations on the new state tests have been developed for students in special education, students with section 504 plans, English-as-second- language and bilingual students, migrant students, and highly capable students.

An accommodation is a variation in the testing environment or process. Accommodations include variations in scheduling, setting, presentation format, and aids and assistance. These variations should not change the level, content, performance criteria, reliability or validity of the test. They are made to ensure all fourth and seventh grade students have the opportunity to demonstrate what they know and can do with their knowledge on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning.

In general terms, accommodations allowed on the new state assessment are similar to those allowed on other tests, such as the CTBS (the test can be administered over a three-week window, in the morning or afternoon, etc). One exception is that CTBS has a time limit, the WASL does not. On the new assessment, it doesn't matter whether a student reads or does math faster than another student or group of students — what matters is that each individual student achieves the knowledge and skills outlined in the state's academic standards. In addition, the amount of time needed for most students to complete a multiple choice assessment is far more predictable than it is on a performance-based assessment.

Guidelines for inclusion and accommodation on the WASL are built around the following assumptions:

- All students should be included
- State-level assessments should be used in conjunction with information from other sources
- Procedures should be responsive to the individual needs of all students Accommodations should be consistent with each student's instructional program and not used for the first time on the state tests.

ALLOWABLE FLEXIBILITY

In general, classroom provisions allowed in the normal course of instruction may be used for state-level tests. This includes:

- Providing more testing time, frequent breaks and adjusting materials to attention span
- Allowing student to use study carrels or another private space
- Providing English or native language dictionaries — except on reading test
- Using student's primary language or signing to give assessment directions

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

If a student's IEP or Section 504 Plan documents a disability that affects reading or written communication, special accommodations can be made. For example, the student can:

- Answer orally, point, or sign an answer. A scribe records the student's response VERBATIM (e.g., from written dictation or audio tape) without interpretation, translation or corrections.
- Use appropriate physical supports or assists as needed (e.g., easel, magnifier, text-talk converter, sound amplification devices).
- Isolate portions of the assessment page to focus student's attention (mask).
- Use Braille or large-type editions of the assessment, with appropriate test
- security measures.
- Use a reader to read math items VERBATIM in English (this accommodation is also applicable for ESL students within a "Limited English Speaker Range" based on a state approved language proficiency test).

EXEMPTIONS FROM STATE TESTS

If an IEP or child study team determines that a student should be exempted from the state assessments, they must consider and document:

- The student's ability to participate;
- Why the assessment, even with accommodations, is not appropriate for the student and evidence supporting the decision;
- Parental permission; and
- How the student will be assessed to measure progress on the state's learning goals.

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Some schools may use the test results to help make student retention and promotion decisions. *In general, the new state tests were not created to determine whether students should pass or fail a certain grade. They are intended to measure what students are learning and to help teachers have better information about where their students need help.*

The Washington Education Reform Act of 1993 shifted emphasis from state level laws and rules that dictate required coursework to a public school system that focuses on the educational performance of students, high expectations for all students, and more flexibility for school boards and educators in how instruction is provided. "Decisions regarding how instruction is to be provided are to be made, to the greatest extent possible, by schools and school districts, not by the state."

Promotion/retention policies cannot be in conflict with the Constitution, state law, or the rules and regulations of the State Board of Education. Beyond these constraints, establishing student promotion/retention policies is left to the discretion of local districts. The final responsibility for developing specific education policies rests with the local school district board of directors.

WHAT TYPES OF PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICIES DO LOCAL DISTRICTS USE?

Student promotion/retention policies tend to fall between two extremes: open policies and fixed policies. Open promotion/retention policies leave room for interpretation and usually contain multiple criteria for judging whether or not a student should be promoted or retained. For example, a policy based on multiple criteria might say:

A student will be promoted to the next grade level when she/he has:

- Completed the course requirements of the currently assigned grade, and/or
- In the opinion of his/her teacher, achieved the instructional objectives set at the present grade, and/or
- Demonstrated proficiency to move ahead to the educational program of the next level, and/or
- Demonstrated the degree of social, emotional, and physical maturation necessary for a successful learning experience at the next learning level.

Fixed policies usually base promotion/retention on a single strict criterion. An example of a fixed promotion/retention policy is a policy based on passing a standardized test. Most often fixed policies are developed in conjunction with educational benchmarks. Students are required to pass a standardized test at designated grade levels in order to advance. Students who do not pass the test do not move on to the next grade.

In between these two extremes are a variety of possibilities. These include promotion/retention policies based on teacher assigned grades, or testing students using locally developed standardized tests.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN DEVELOPING PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICIES AND GUIDELINES?

Because promotion or retention is a very important decision which impacts all area's of a child's life, the policy development team should include the local school board, district administration, student support staff, classroom teachers, and parents. Such a representative group can consider all facets of the issue in developing the philosophy on which school staff can base promotion/retention decisions as well as the procedure to be followed and factors that will influence the decision.

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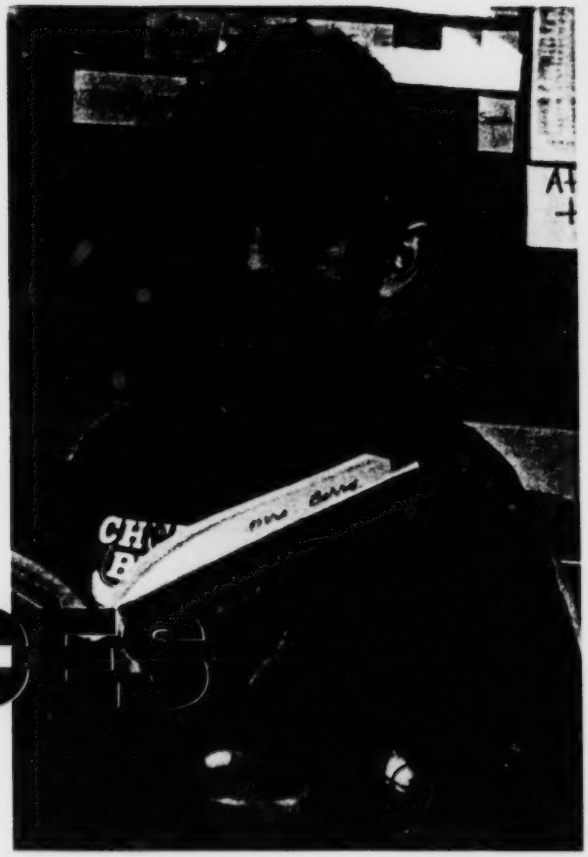
WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY SCHOOL DISTRICTS SHOULD CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING PROMOTION AND RETENTION POLICIES AND GUIDELINES?

Case studies of student promotion/retention policies have led to a variety of considerations for school districts developing their own promotion/retention policies. Some guidelines and considerations gathered from research are outlined below:

- Establish a clear philosophy or goal. Many promotion/retention policies contain guidelines and procedures, but no philosophical basis or goal for the policy. For many policies, the implied goal is to make correct educational decisions for the students. However, an explicitly stated philosophy or goal provides a clear criterion against which details of the policy and even individual promotion/retention decisions can be measured.
- State the promotion/retention criteria clearly. A school's promotion policy should explain clearly the criteria for promotion, how promotion/retention decisions will be made in cases where some of the criteria are not met, and who will be involved in the decision-making process. Whatever constitutes the school's general operating procedure for moving students from one grade to the next should be stated as the general promotion policy of the school or district.
- Develop flexible promotion/retention standards. At a minimum this means not relying on a single test score. In the interest of being adaptable to the needs of individual students, promotion standards should include multiple criteria, and should leave room for appeal.
- Use a valid measure of achievement. Most legal challenges to promotion/retention policies have occurred when policies are based on standardized tests, whose reliability and validity have been contested due to continually low scores by students with certain types of backgrounds. On the other hand, courts have been consistent in their view that teacher assigned grades are within a teacher's area of educational expertise. Past court action makes it clear that school officials must make certain that achievement criteria reliably and validly reflect what students are taught as well as what they have learned.
- Include more than minimum competency. Many promotion/retention policies focus on minimum competency. Minimum competency can sometimes lead to a pass/fail mentality in which those who pass stop working hard.
- Promotion/retention policies are more beneficial when they are part of a much broader orientation toward high achievement for all students.
- Emphasize instruction over retention. Retention should not be used as a threat, but as an opportunity to provide intensified remedial help. Retention can be seen as putting students in the slow track, and instruction can help get them out.
- Retention policies should state the specific learning improvement plan that is to be followed. This may include procedures for assisting students and checking students' progress more than once a year, so that students have a chance to catch up with their peers.



RESOURCES

The ideas outlined in this booklet are only a beginning. There are many other activities and resources that can support your school's improvement plan. Following are some good places to turn for local and national information, ideas, resources and materials about implementing school improvement. Most of these listings include an Internet address — a fast and efficient way to gather information.

WASHINGTON COMMISSION ON STUDENT LEARNING

Old Capitol Building
Room 222
P.O. Box 47220
Olympia, WA 98504-7220
360/664-3155
http://csl.wednet.edu

The Commission is the agency charged with developing many of the provisions of Washington's school improvement effort. It has four primary responsibilities:

- Set clear, challenging academic standards, based on the state's learning goals, that every student in the state should achieve;
- Create a sound assessment system that will determine how well students are achieving the higher academic standards;
- Develop ways to hold schools, teachers and students accountable for results; and
- Recommend other steps necessary to ensure that all students can meet high expectations.

The Commission's Website includes information on:

- Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements;
- Washington Assessment of Student Learning;
- Guidelines for Inclusion and Accommodation on the state assessment
- Classroom-based assessment;
- Accountability system recommendations; and
- The Certificate of Mastery.

The Commission sunsets in June, 1999, at which time its work will be assumed by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (OSPI)

Old Capitol Building
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504
360/753-6738
http://inspire.ospi.wednet.edu/

OSPI's mission is to ensure ample, equitable and quality educational services for all of Washington state's children. It acts as an advocate on behalf of an early childhood/K-12 education agenda, which promotes secure funding and services based on student needs.

CENTER FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

Old Capitol Building
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200
360/664-3312
http://cisl.ospi.wednet.edu/

The Center is located in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and serves as a clearinghouse for successful practice and research about improving schools. The center also provides technical assistance and support to teachers, administrators, parents, communities, school boards, and educational organizations.

ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

1021 - 8th Avenue SE
Olympia, WA 98501
360/357-7951
http://www.principal.org/

AWSP provides conferences, workshops and publications to support K-12 principals. A variety of topics are presented annually including many related to best practices to meet the expectations of school reform.

AWSP recognizes the following: The role of school principal is a leadership position of critical importance in the compulsory schooling system of our democratic society. A principal assumes enormous professional, ethical, moral, legal, and supervisory responsibilities and accountability. A principal's key task is to build a structure of relationships in the school so that all children have the opportunity to learn. To do this, the principal must have and use professional knowledge and skills to create a school environment in which children can achieve their potential.

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PARTNERSHIP FOR LEARNING

1215 - 4th Avenue
Suite 1020
Seattle, WA 98161
206/625-9655
Order line: 800/550-5437
http://www.partnership-wa.org

Partnership for Learning is a non-profit organization supported by Washington business and community leaders. Its purpose is to increase public awareness about Washington state's effort to raise the academic standards in our public schools. Resources available from the Partnership include:

- A Parents Guide to Your Child's Academic Success. A Guide for parents on Washington's new, higher academic standards.
- A Businessperson's Guide to Washington's School Improvement Strategy. This publication provides an overview of this effort for business people and gives some suggestions of things businesses can do to support schools' efforts to raise academic standards.
- Better Schools Briefing. The Partnership produces this quarterly newsletter about the implementation of the new standards.

The Partnership is available to support communication with parents and community groups interested in Washington's school improvement effort. They can supply packets of information, including brochures, short newsletter articles, copies of newspaper articles, and speakers to address community organizations.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Old Capitol Building
P.O. Box 47206
Olympia, WA 98504-7206
360/753-6715
http://inform.ospi.wednet.edu/sbe/

The State Board is the 11-member policy-making body responsible for establishing rules and guidelines for the management and operation of the state's K-12 school system. Specifically, the board's responsibilities include determining requirements for high school graduation; school accreditation; school construction; district organization; and teacher preparation, certification and code of professional conduct.

WASHINGTON EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

http://www.wa.nea.org/

This site includes information about professional development programs, teacher certification, paraeducator issues, and publications such as "Building Community Connections" and "52 Ways to Help Your Child Learn."

WASHINGTON STATE LEGISLATURE

http://leginfo.leg.wa.gov/

This web site includes legislative information about House and Senate bills, bill reports, amendments, daily bill status, topical index, a session calendar, and a roster of members of the House and Senate.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICE DISTRICTS

Educational Service Districts can be called upon for services and materials to support activities in local schools and school districts.

ESD 101
1025 West Indiana Avenue
Spokane, WA 99205-4400
509/456-7683

ESD 105
33 South 2nd Ave
Yakima, WA 98902
509/575-2885

ESD 112
2500 NE 65th Avenue
Vancouver, WA 98661
360/750-7505

ESD 113
601 McPhee Road SW
Olympia, WA 98502-5080
360/664-0942

ESD 123
124 South 4th Ave
Pasco, WA 99301
509/547-8441

North Central ESD
PO Box 1847
Wenatchee, WA 98807-1847
509/664-0358

ESD 189
205 Stewart Road
Mount Vernon, WA 98273
360/424-9573

Northwest Initiative for Teaching
and Learning (NWIFTL)
12111 NE 1st St.
Bellevue, WA 98009-9010
425/456-4583

Olympic ESD 114
105 National Avenue N
Bremerton, WA 98312
360/478-6872

Puget Sound ESD
400 SW 152nd Street
Burien, WA 98166-2209
206/439-6912

Washington School Districts

Below is a small sample of school districts in Washington which are moving aggressively to develop and implement high academic standards for their students. *The publishers of this booklet do not endorse the activities associated with these school districts.* They are shown simply to illustrate a few ways that districts and schools are working to help students meet the higher standards.

BELLINGHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

1306 Dupont
Bellingham, WA 98225
360/676-6400
http://www.bham.wednet.edu/curric.htm

The Bellingham School District has established:

- Broad "Essential Student Learning Goals" that represent general goals for what student ought to have learned by the time they graduate; and
- Specific student performance outcomes in mathematics and language arts that specify the exact skills and knowledge Bellingham students will be expected to learn in these subject areas. These performance outcomes are organized by grades K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-10, and 11-12.

EDMONDS SCHOOL DISTRICT

20420 68th Avenue, West
Lynnwood, WA 98036-7400
206/670-7000
http://dent.edmonds.wednet.edu/SA/stds.html

The Edmonds School District has developed an extensive strategic plan to guide the district's efforts to raise academic standards. The district has progressed furthest in developing "curriculum frameworks" for language arts and mathematics. The frameworks include the following components:

- Content standards that specify what students should know and be able to do in these subject areas;
- "Key results" that ask students to apply and integrate knowledge and skills from different subject areas;
- Products and performances for grade levels, departments or programs that indicate students are meeting the standards;
- Common assessments (assessments given by a grade level or department, rather than in one classroom) that measure whether students are meeting the standards; and
- Examples of high quality student work or instructional units.

FEDERAL WAY SCHOOL DISTRICT

31405 18th Avenue, South
Federal Way, WA 98003
206/945-2000
http://www.fwsd.wednet.edu/FW/CUR/curr.html

The Federal Way School District has established clear academic standards for what its students should know and be able to do in eight core subject areas: reading, writing, communication, mathematics, science, social studies, health and fitness, and the arts. Standards are organized by grades K-3, 4-6, 7-8, 9-10, and 11-12. The district's standards-setting effort also includes providing examples of student work and brochures for parents.

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KENNEWICK SCHOOL DISTRICT

524 South Auburn Street
Kennewick, WA 99336-5601
509/585-3022
http://www.ksd.org

The Kennewick School District has established district "Essential Academic Learning Standards" which are statements of what students should know and be able to do at various grade levels in core academic subjects. The district's assessment program includes the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) and a Curriculum Framework Assessment System (CFAS), as well as criterion-referenced level tests in math and reading and performance tests in mathematics problem-solving and in writing.

KENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

12033 SE 256th Street
Kent, WA 98031-6643
206/813-7000
http://www.kent.wednet.edu:80/KSD/IS/SLO/index.html

The Kent School District has established "Student Learning Objectives" for what students should know and be able to do in health, language arts, math, music, physical education, science, social studies, visual arts, and world language. These objectives are organized by each grade level for grades K-9 and by course for grades 10-12 (high school). Information about the Student Learning Objectives on the Kent web site includes:

- "District-wide goals" for what students should learn in each subject areas;
- Specific standards for what students should learn in each grade level;
- Courses and units that help students learn the skills and knowledge specified in the standards;
- Classroom assessment strategies that teachers can use to measure whether students are meeting the standards; and
- Resources for teachers.

The Kent District also uses digital portfolios which are kept on-line and allow students to keep track of their best work.

TACOMA SCHOOL DISTRICT

601 South 8th Street
Tacoma WA 98405
253/571-1015
http://www.tacoma.k12.wa.us

The Tacoma School District has developed K-8 performance expectations that are tied to the state's benchmarks for the essential academic learning requirements in reading, writing and mathematics. Tacoma's expectations of student performance are reflected in the standards that the district has established for students' promotion from elementary school to middle school and from middle school to high school.

Student progress on the promotion standards is measured using both standards-based classroom assessments and test results. Ninety percent of the decision about student performance is based on classroom assessments, only ten percent of the decision is based on test scores (the WASL and a locally-developed curriculum-referenced test.)

The assessment of all student work is scored using a five-point scoring rubric. Teachers are provided with comprehensive scoring guides, including annotated student work, to assist with the scoring of in-classroom activities. Each summer scored student work and the scoring guides are reviewed by teachers and curriculum staff to assure that accuracy and coherence with the state's academic learning requirements are maintained.

Keeping track of student performance on the classroom assessments begins in grade three and extends through grade eight. Portfolios of student work move with the student from grade to grade. Teachers may submit updates to an academic progress database on a monthly basis. This database is used to produce "home reports" which are mailed to parents, to assure that individual students' progress follows students as they move from school to school, and to generate up-to-date listings and disaggregated reports of district-wide student performance in literacy and mathematics.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (NASSP)

1904 Association Drive
Reston, VA 20191
703/860-0200
http://www.nassp.org/

NASSP provides publications and programs for principals, assistant principals, teachers, and others associated with secondary education. An excellent list and series of links to education-related web sites can be found on a specific section of NASSP's web site (http://www.nassp.org/webs_frm.htm).

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS (NAESP)

1615 Duke Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3483
703/684-3345 800/386-2377
http://www.naesp.org/
NASSP 800/253-7746

ASSOCIATION FOR SUPERVISION AND CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT (ASCD)

1250 N. Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA
22314-1453 USA
800/933-ASCD
Fax: 703/299-8631
http://www.ascd.org/

ASCD provides professional development programs and materials for educators. The organization's Web site provides access to numerous informative publications such as:

- Successful Schools Series: Guidebooks to Effective School Leadership — Focuses on the most important issues in school administration and provides successful strategies for managing each issue. Format favors a "lean and mean" presentation using checklists, tables, diagrams and other strategies that provide for a quick read. Topics are broken down into succinct chunks with summaries and definitions of key terms. A practitioner's viewpoint, favoring tried-and-true solutions, is maintained throughout the series.
- Learning Together: Professional Development for Better Schools — Advice you need to take professional development for teachers way beyond isolated workshops. Written by educators, this book offers specific strategies and guidelines, such as: Tried-and-true principles of effective professional development; conditions every school needs to ensure teachers can improve activities that promote collaboration in schools; effective professional development programs; a 7-step action plan that helps you build trust, provide time, and ensure recognition for effective professional development. Essential characteristics of effective professional development are explored in depth with benchmark lists and frequently asked questions, so you can evaluate your programs. Examples from real schools help you fully understand how the principles can be applied in everyday practice.

EDUCATION WEEK

4301 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 432
Washington, DC 20008
202/686-0800
http://www.edweek.org

This publication provides extensive and in-depth coverage about national and individual state education reform efforts, leaders in the education community, schools, and policies and issues affecting schools. In addition to providing current articles from the newspaper, the site also provides a featured "Special Report"; an archive of articles dating back to 1989; "In Context," which offers background information and data to better understand the week's news; and the most recent edition of Education Week's spin-off publication, Teacher Magazine.

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THE EDUCATION TRUST

1725 K Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20006
202/293-1217
http://www.edtrust.org

The Education Trust was created within the American Association for Higher Education. Now an independent organization, it works to provide strong leadership in the effort to strengthen the connections between K-12 and higher education institutions. Through its various initiatives, the Trust aims to increase significantly the number of poor and minority students in the nation's urban communities who enter and successfully complete four years of higher education.

The Education Trust offers two resources for educators, parents, community and business leaders on the importance of setting standards and how to implement them in the classroom:

- Front End Alignment. Explains how to carry out a local standards-setting process involving teachers, higher education faculty, parents and business representatives. It provides useful examples and a step-by-step guide to setting standards and to putting standards to use in classrooms.
- Learning in Overdrive — Designing Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment from Standards. A Manual for Teachers. This document was written for educators who want to ensure their students are meeting high standards in their classroom, but are unsure of where to begin.

PUBLIC AGENDA FOUNDATION

6 East 39th Street
New York, NY 10016
212/686-6610

Public Agenda is an independent non-partisan organization that works to help citizens better understand critical policy issues and to help the nation's leaders better understand the public's point of view. The organization has done extensive research in examining the views of citizens concerning school reform, accountability and education standards.

- Americans' Views on Standards: An Assessment by Public Agenda. A report of Americans' attitudes about raising and enforcing higher academic standards in public schools.
- Assignments Incomplete: The Unfinished Business of Education Reform. Examines why support for public schools is in jeopardy; why Americans are so concerned with the basics; whether people are really committed to higher standards; and whether they value education in and of itself.
- The Broken Contract: Connecticut Citizens Look at Public Education. This study takes an in-depth look at Connecticut citizens' views on public education and why they hold these attitudes.
- First Things First: What Americans Expect from the Public Schools. Results of public opinion research with over 1,100 citizens that examines Americans views about schools and school reform.
- Getting By: What American Teenagers Really Think About Their Schools. This study examines the views of high school students about the importance of education, effort, and good teachers. It surveyed high school students from around the country and conducted focus groups in five areas, including Seattle.
- Given the Circumstances: Teachers Talk About Public Education Today. This report examines the views of public school teachers on how the public schools are performing; what children need to learn; and what schools need to be effective. Includes a comparison of the views of teachers, the public, parents and community leaders.

THE NATIONAL NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS

Johns Hopkins University
Center on School, Family, and
Community Partnerships/CRESPAR
3003 North Charles Street, Suite 200
Baltimore, MD 21218
410/516-8818
http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/

The National Network of Partnership Schools is a non-profit organization at Johns Hopkins University that brings together schools, districts, and states that are committed to developing and maintaining comprehensive programs of school-family-community partnerships. The Network provides specific steps and strategies communities can pursue to bring true and effective participation and involvement in schools. The Network also organizes "action teams" made up of teachers, parents, community members, and students. These teams work to assess present practices, organize options for new partnerships, and evaluate next steps all with the ultimate goal of producing positive results for students.

THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON TEACHING AND AMERICA'S FUTURE

Teachers College
Columbia University
New York, NY
212/678-3204
http://www.tc.columbia
.edu/~teachcomm

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future is a blue-ribbon panel of 26 public officials, business and community leaders, and educators who are broadly knowledgeable about education, school reform, and teaching. It was convened to recommend approaches to teacher recruitment, preparation, induction, and professional renewal; develop a policy agenda for implementing these recommendation; and launch a public outreach strategy to engage key decision makers and constituencies on behalf of a well articulated teacher development agenda.

The Commission issued its report — "What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future" — in September 1996. This report offers a blueprint for recruiting, preparing, and supporting excellent teachers in all of America's schools.

ACHIEVE: A RESOURCE CENTER ON STANDARDS, ASSESSMENTS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND TECHNOLOGY

http://www.achieve.org/

ACHIEVE is a private, not-for-profit organization created in October 1996 to assist governors and business leaders in their efforts to raise student achievement to world class levels by establishing high academic standards, using better means of school accountability, and ensuring the effective use of technology in schools.

ACHIEVE's work plan includes the following activities:

- Develop and maintain a national clearinghouse to collect and disseminate information and research about standards, assessments, accountability systems, and technology;
- Offer a voluntary benchmarking program for states to compare their standards, assessment tools, and accountability programs against high-performing states, localities, and countries;
- Provide technical assistance to governors, business leaders, states, and local school districts seeking to raise academic standards; and
- Publish an independent annual progress report describing the achievements of business leaders and governors in raising academic standards.

Many of ACHIEVE's resources will be distributed via its web site, including its clearinghouse of information and its annual reports.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS

555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20001-2079
202/879-4400
http://www.aft.org.

The AFT is a national teachers organization that represents the professional, economic and social concerns of almost one million members, including elementary and secondary teachers, higher education faculty, and other school employees. It offers numerous publications, including:

- Reaching High Standards: What We Mean and Why We Need It. This booklet lays out the case for using high standards to improve schools, including the need for rigorous, common standards; state-administered assessments; explicit rewards for achievement; and special programs to help struggling students advance until high standards are met. It also includes specific recommendations for the first steps to be taken toward reaching these goals.
- Making Standards Count: The Case for Student Incentives. Adapted from an address by the late AFT President Albert Shanker, this booklet makes the case that efforts to raise standards and improve U.S. education will fall short if students don't face consequences for whether they meet the standards.

THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS

26555 Evergreen Road, Suite 400
Southfield, MI 48076
810/351-4444
http://www.nbpts.org

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is developing high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do and a national voluntary assessment system to assess and certify "master" teachers who meet these high standards. The National Board is an independent, nonpartisan organization.

The National Board's goal is to improve student learning by strengthening teaching. Until the board began its work, the teaching profession had never defined the knowledge, skills and accomplishments that add up to teaching excellence. In contrast, physicians, architects and other professionals work under clear and objective standards for accomplished practice and must demonstrate their accomplishments on challenging sets of assessments. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards reliably identifies teachers who meet high and rigorous standards and communicates what accomplished teaching looks like. Many documents are available for free on the board's web site, such as:

- An Invitation to National Board Certification. A brief question and answer piece about the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the certification process.
- 1996-97 Portfolio Sampler. Part of the certification process is completing a portfolio of best work. The Sampler provides actual portfolio exercises that teachers have completed — giving teachers interested in National Board certification a clear idea about the assessments they will be asked to take.
- Standards Documents. Standards documents are structured around student developmental levels (early childhood, middle childhood, early adolescence, and young adulthood) as well as by subject area.
- State and Local Action Report. The report summarizes efforts at the state and local level to support National Board certification.
- What Teachers Should Know and Be Able to Do. This document is the central policy statement of the National Board and explains the five core propositions of what teachers should know and be able to do.

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THE CENTER FOR THE FUTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

335 Shake Mill Road
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
408/427-3628
http://www.cftl.org/

The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning is made up of education professionals, scholars and public policy experts who are working to improve the schooling of California's children. The center was founded in 1995 as a private, nonprofit organization with a clear purpose: "to increase the capacity of California's teachers for delivering the rigorous, well-rounded curriculum that will allow all students to meet the higher standards of intellectual, ethical and social development required for success in today's fast-changing world." The center's work is organized around three areas:

- Researching effective teaching practices and professional development;
- Using what it has learned about the best professional development to shape state and local education policies; and
- Bridge the communication gaps between those who make and implement policies, those who teach, those who do research, and those who deliver professional development.

THE COUNCIL FOR BASIC EDUCATION

1319 F Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20004-1152
202/347-4171
http://www.c-b-e.org.

The Council is a non-profit membership organization that promotes a liberal arts curriculum for all children in elementary and secondary education. It provides technical assistance to school districts and states as they engage in developing and implementing standards, develops criteria for evaluating academic standards, and reviews and critiques proposed standards.

The Council for Basic Education publishes books and periodicals designed to strengthen the academic rigor of elementary and secondary education.

ANNENBERG INSTITUTE FOR SCHOOL REFORM

Brown University
P.O. Box 1985
Providence, RI 02912
401/863-1290
http://www.aisr.brown.edu

The Annenberg Institute is a non-profit organization at Brown University that promotes and advocates the redesign of schooling in the United States. Its goal is to work with communities to create and sustain top notch schools that help all students reach high levels of learning. The institute is committed to developing reform strategies that include schools serving urban, minority and low-income students. The work of the Annenberg Institute is carries out in three research strands:

- Rethinking accountability to include both the use of effective assessments and the strategies to use them to improve student performance.
- Engaging the public as advocates for excellent schools and participants in developing and sustaining them.
- Developing the capacity of schools and teachers to set and help their students meet high standards.

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

1775 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20036
202/797-6172 or 800/275-1447
http://www.brook.edu

The nation's oldest think tank, this private independent research organization is committed to improving the performance of American institutions, the effectiveness of government programs and the quality of U.S. public policies.

The Brookings Institution provides scholarly research on a variety of current and emerging education policy related topics, and publications such as:

- The Brookings Papers on Education. This annual guide, edited by Diane Ravitch, features leading national education experts who will provide insights and in-depth analysis of education trends and emerging issues.
- Debating the Future of American Education and National Standards in American Education: A Citizen's Guide. This book explains the origin and rationale of the effort to set standards and design better assessments; defines what standards are and the purposes they might serve in education; explores the history of standards and assessment in American education; reviews evidence about student achievement in the United States; considers federal and state-level activities, and analyzes the prospects for an national system of standards and assessment.

BUSINESS COALITION FOR EDUCATION REFORM

c/o The National Alliance of Business
1201 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 700
Washington, DC 20005
800/787-2848
http://www.bcer.org

The coalition represents twelve national business organizations committed to strengthening America's schools and increasing academic achievement of all students. It works to expand business involvement in education at the national, state and local levels.

The Business Coalition for Education Reform provides resources on the importance to business of having high academic and workplace skill standards in schools.

- Bridging the Gap: Initiatives Linking Education and the Workplace. This booklet highlights ways that business leaders are working with educators and community leaders to reinforce the relevance of academic achievement to success in the workplace and in life after school.
- The Business of Education Standards Video. This video illustrates the increasing skill requirements of the workplace and why high academic achievement is essential to student success after high school.
- The Challenge of Change: Standards to Make Education Work for All Our Children. This paper explains the perspective of businesses in supporting clear and high academic standards that students are expected to meet.

CARNEGIE CORPORATION OF NEW YORK

437 Madison Avenue
New York, NY 10022
212/371-3200
http://www.carnegie.org/operprog.htm

Although a grantmaking foundation, Carnegie Corporation also carries out its work by means of study groups and programs managed by the officers through appropriations from the grants budget. From 1986 to 1994, five such operating programs were established, based either at the Corporation's headquarters or in Washington, D.C. One example follows:

Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades
The Carnegie Task Force on Learning in the Primary Grades was established in 1994 to examine the needs of children in prekindergarten through the fourth grade. The task force studied the condition of primary education and in 1996 produced its report, based on a synthesis of the best available mscientific research and expert practice. The report recommended the expansion of high-quality preschool education, more education for parenthood, greater parental involvement in children's education, and the reorganization of elementary schools to enable all students to meet rigorous academic standards.

Numerous publications are available, such as *Years of Promise: A Comprehensive Learning Strategy for America's Children (Executive Summary)*.

THE BUSINESS ROUNDTABLE

1615 L Street, NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20036
202/872-1260

The Roundtable has an aggressive initiative to improve schools that is based on the idea of states setting clear standards and holding schools and students accountable for meeting the standards. The Roundtable offers a variety of materials on the role of business in supporting education reform, such as:

- Continuing the Commitment: Essential Components of a Successful Education System. Outlines the Roundtable's nine-point agenda for improving schools based on the fundamental belief that all children can and must learn at higher levels. The agenda includes standards, assessments, accountability, autonomy, professional development, parent involvement, learning readiness, technology, and safety and discipline.

THIRD INTERNATIONAL MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE STUDY (TIMSS)

National Center for Education Statistics
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20208-5651
202/219-1395
http://www.ed.gov/NCES/timss/brochure.html

The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) is the largest, most comprehensive international comparison of teaching, learning and achievement in math and science achievement to date. It includes data on half a million students in three grade levels from the U.S. and forty other countries. Preliminary data from the study was released in late 1996; additional data will be provided in the future as future research is done on the findings. TIMSS was funded by the National Center for Education Statistics, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Science Foundation, and the Canadian government.

A startling finding from the study: U.S. eighth graders scored below the international average in math. According to education officials, the reason is because the curriculum in U.S. schools is not challenging enough. "This study shows we expect less from our children and they meet our expectations," said U.S. Commission of Education Statistics Pascal Forgione when the study's findings were release in November 1996. "What we teach in eighth grade mathematics, classes overseas typically cover in seventh grade. Our curriculum, teaching, and textbooks are less focused and challenging that that of other countries."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT GOVERNING BOARD

800 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002-4233
202/357-6938
http://www.nagb.org/

NAGB is an independent 26-member board includes governors, state legislators, principals, teachers, and parents — was established by Congress in 1988 to set policy for NAEP. The NAGB responsibilities include selecting the subject areas to be assessed, determining the content and design of each NAEP assessment, approving all test items, and developing appropriate student performance levels for grades 4, 8, and 12.

NATIONAL CENTER ON EDUCATION AND THE ECONOMY

700 11th Street, NW, Suite 750
Washington, DC 20005
202/783-3668
http://www.ncee.org.

The Center is a private, non-profit organization that assists schools, school districts, and states with efforts to improve school systems and to raise the skills and knowledge of students.

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20208-5574
202/219-1828
http://www.ed.gov/NCES

The National Center for Education Statistics collects, analyzes and reports statistical data related to U.S. and international education, including information on student performance from NAEP assessments. Major publications include The Digest of Education Statistics, Projections of Education Statistics and The Condition of Education.